

Impact of Self-Gift Behavior on Masstige Consumption: Moderating Role of Self-Esteem and Ideal- Social-Self

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Masstige is a new marketing trend that emerged from democratizing luxury brands to the middle class. And in this era of democratization, individuals are consuming luxury not only to get social distinction but also to offer consumers personal experience and a sense of self-indulgence through its high-quality, premium price, and social reputation. As a way of self-indulgence, consumers self-gift themselves with affordable luxury. This study explores the role of consumers' self-gift behavior involved in the intention to consume masstige smartphone brands. This study identifies the motives of self-gift that affect masstige brand consumption. This study also explores the moderating role of self-esteem and ideal social self as the moderator in the relationship between self-gift and masstige consumption. Using the masstige mean index, this study also identifies the masstige brands in the smartphone industry of Pakistan. Data was gathered by means of a self-administered questionnaire from 560 smartphone users in Pakistan. The statistical technique of structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized for data analysis. The outcomes of the study suggest that all dimensions of self-gift behavior used in this study positively affect masstige consumption. At the same time, self-esteem and ideal-social-self moderate the relationship between self-esteem and masstige consumption. The findings of this study enrich the masstige literature by examining the influence of self-gift behavior on masstige brand consumption.

1 Introduction

In recent years the meaning of traditional luxury has changed with the emergence of masstige, a new marketing trend that is driven by the proliferation, globalization, and democratization of luxury (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003; Kumar et al., 2019; Shukla et al., 2022). Masstige was coined in 2003 by Silverstein and Fiesk, who defined it as a downward brand extension aimed to create prestige for the masses, which implies that individuals are willing to pay relatively less to enhance prestige (Silverstein & Fiske 2003; Lim et al., 2022). Similarly, Kumar et al. (2019) defined masstige as a marketing strategy based on product and promotion plans that make brands prestigious, keeping the price relatively high at the same time while preserving their affordability for consumers at large. The key characteristics of masstige are affordability, availability, and penetration in the mass markets, emphasizing offering luxury brands to the middle class (Paul, 2015).

In the last few years, global economic growth coupled with the increased purchasing power of middle-class consumers has resulted in increased demand for luxury all around the world, especially in the Asia-Pacific region (Bian & Forsythe, 2012; Kumar et al., 2021). And luxury brands adopted the masstige marketing strategy to enter this huge market (Paul, 2018). Asian developing and emerging countries have a huge middle class expected to grow at 2.7% by 2030 (Kravets & Sandikci, 2014). The middle-class consumers of emerging and developing countries are buying affordable luxury (masstige) as they use brand prestige to create their identity, associate themselves with the upper class, reach a specific status, abide by social approval as a means of self-expression, and serve themselves with self-gift (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012; Shahid & Paul, 2021).

Self-gift is defined as a means of self-indulgence and self-communication (Mick & Demoss, 1990). Consumers self-gift themselves (Gupta, Eilert & Gentry, 2020). While self-gifting, they prefer prestigious luxury brands as they are supposed to provide high-quality, emotional, and personalized experiences (Shahid & Paul, 2021; Das Shah & Roy, 2022). Wiedmann et al. (2007) also identify self-gift as the individual's driver for luxury consumption. The self-gifting behavior is increasing, and everyone wants to self-gift within their spending limit. Masstige brands allow them to buy something nice for themselves within their limit.

Given the increasing popularity of masstige brands in the marketplace (Kumar et al., 2019), it becomes important for researchers to explore how consumers' behaviors, especially self-gift behavior, urge them to buy masstige brands. Therefore, the motivating question for this study is how the consumer's self-gift behavior affects their consumption of masstige brands. However, self-gift has received attention in consumer behavior research. Researchers like Ahn et al. (2016) and Wiedmann et al. (2007) highlighted self-gift as the antecedents of luxury consumption. Nevertheless, the antecedents of masstige brand consumption differ from luxury; therefore, it is

necessary to investigate them separately (Kumar et al., 2019). A comprehensive investigation of self-gift as a factor of masstige consumption is missing from the researcher's knowledge. Based on the self-regulation theory, this study believes consumers self-gift for compensation or consolation. Hence, this study is aimed to fill this gap by investigating the role of self-gift behavior on the intention to consume masstige brands. This study is conducted in a developing country Pakistan, which has a huge market share of the middle class out of its total population (30 % of the total population) (Tirmizi, 2020: SBP Annual Report, 2020). And these middle-class consumers aspire for higher living status, demanding more affordable, prestigious goods. The same is noted by Paul (2015) and Kumar et al. (2019), who reported that the demand for affordable luxury has been increasing globally, especially since the middle class in developing and emerging countries are looking for more affordable luxury brands. That makes developing and emerging countries an ideal context to explore the masstige value of a brand. So, by examining the role of self-gift on masstige consumption in Pakistan, this study will try to fill the literature gap and contribute to masstige theory by investigating another factor (self-gift) of masstige consumption. This study also examines how individuals' self-esteem and desired ideal social self moderate the relationship between self-gift and intention to buy masstige brands.

The subsequent sections of this manuscript are structured as follows: Section 2 provides an elaborate literature review, commencing with the theoretical foundations of happiness. This review is subsequently divided into three distinct sub-sections. Section 3 delves into the methodology employed in this research. Section 4 presents the obtained results. Finally, Section 5 offers an in-depth analysis of the findings, encompassing theoretical and managerial implications, limitations, and avenues for future research. The last section provides the conclusion of the study.

2 Literature Review

In the last few decades, with the emergence of masstige marketing, traditional luxury has changed from rarity to making it accessible to the masses (Shahid & Paul, 2021). Considering the huge luxury demand from the middle class, who are ready to pay a premium for affordable luxury, the luxury brands adopted a masstige marketing strategy aimed at making luxury available to the middle class at an affordable price (Lim et al., 2022; Bahri-Ammari, et al., 2020). Though research has been conducted after the seminal article of Silverstein and Fiesk in 2003, more research is needed to contribute to masstige in terms of theoretical development, scale development, and investigating factors that urge the consumer to buy masstige goods and services. Some researchers have contributed to masstige theory by investigating it from different perspectives, value perception and conspicuous consumption (Purohit & Rada, 2022), masstige score for brands, and country of origin (Kumar & Paul, 2018), happiness (Kumar et al., 2021), utilitarian motives (Iaia et al., 2022), emotional appeal (pleasure, guilt, and desire), Das et al. (2022), etc. But the, self-gift behavior is not investigated with the masstige brand consumption. This study investigates the relationship of self-gift with the consumption of masstige brands.

2.1 Self-gift and Masstige Consumption

Self-gift is a form of personal-oriented consumption that refers to products and services consumers buy for themselves as consolation or reward (Mortimer, 2015; Heath, 2011). Researchers have identified different motives for self-gift, such as comfort, reward, anniversary, extra money, anxiety, carving to show off, and status (Heath et al., 2015). The self-regulation theory categorizes self-gift motives into promotion and prevention motives, which support therapeutic, celebratory, and negative mood reinforcement motives (Higgins, 1997; Mouakhar-Klouz, 2016). Other researchers have mentioned social recognition, self-comfort, need satisfaction, status, and signal of achievement as motives for self-gift (Choi, 2015; Truong et al., 2009). In 2015 Mortimer divided all the motives of self-gift into seven dimensions: reward, celebratory, therapeutic motivation, personal disappointment, positive mood reinforcement, negative mood reduction, and hedonic. Whatever the reason, an affordable luxury gift is a nice way to treat oneself (Mouakhar-Klouz et al., 2016).

Affordable luxury gifts have become increasingly popular for self-gifting (Kim, 2013). Consumers worldwide, including those in Asia and emerging countries, tend to buy affordable luxury and small luxury (masstige) goods as a gift for themselves (Ahn et al., 2016; Gupta et al., 2020) because they perceive them as top-of-the-line and luxurious within their spending limit (Choi, 2015; Mouakhar-Klouz et al., 2016). Masstige has contributed to the increasing trend of self-gifting, as it has made it possible for people from different classes to buy something nice for themselves within their budget, such as beauty products, performing arts, home decoration, exercise, flowers, travel, dining, beverages, and electronics (Kim, 2015; Hudders & Pandelaere, 2013). Hence based on previous studies and the theory of self-regulation, this study proposes that

H1: Self-Gift (a: reward (SGR), b: celebratory (SGC), c: therapeutic motivation (SGTM), d: positive mood reinforcement (SGPMR), e: hedonic (SGH), f: negative mood reduction (SGNMR), g: personal disappointment (SGPD) has a positive effect on the masstige consumption

2.2 Self-esteem, Self-gift, and Masstige

Self-esteem shows how individuals value and evaluate themselves (Rosenberg et al. 1995). Individuals with high self-esteem hold a positive view of themselves (Rudich & Gregg, 2007), which helps them realize their goals and self-actualize. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem hold negative feelings about themselves; they are unsatisfied with the current situation and face the fear of social exclusion. Therefore, they are more sensitive to their social appearance and status and will look for ways to feel good and improve their self-esteem (Dhandra, 2020). Therefore, they buy goods that symbolize status (Rudich & Gregg, 2007). The same is supported by the theory of self-enhancement, which states that individuals facing low self-esteem involve

more in self-enhancement activities. Mick and DeMoss (1990) further elaborate that as a means of self-enhancement, individuals' self-gift themselves with status goods to induce positive emotions.

Literature confirms that self-esteem plays a vital role in consumer behavior and affects consumer emotional brand attachment, purchasing motivation, brand association, self-gifting behavior, etc. Dhandra (2020) noted that self-esteem is one of the main contributors to self-gifting consumer behavior, which affects all dimensions of self-gifting behavior. According to Heath et al. (2011), consumers participate in therapeutic self-gift to deal with loss and loneliness and when they feel depressed or need to enhance their self-esteem. Individuals with high self-esteem are more self-oriented and positively respond to self-gifting advertising slogans like (L'Oreal: Because I am worth it) (Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar, 2007). Individuals with low self-esteem hold a negative view of themselves, experience anxiety, and fear disapproval from others (Rosenberg et al., 1995), and they engage in self-gift behavior as it can improve self-worth, which is an essential component of self-esteem (Mick & DeMoss, 1990). Other researchers also stated that individuals with low self-esteem tend to own luxury and quality goods to get pleasure and show their status and purchasing power to others (Wadman, 2000; Malär, 2006). The same is even true for masstige brands, as the prestige and symbolic meaning associated with them help individuals establish identity and status in society, boosting their self-confidence. The same is noted by Pourazad et al. (2019), who mentioned that consumers seek to enhance their self-esteem by relating a brand's prestige with their identity. This view is supported by the theory of social identity, which suggests that customers' desire for identity, the brand's mass prestige, hedonic rewards, and distinctiveness increase a brand's passion and purchase intention (Gilal et al., 2021; Dhandra, 2020). Therefore, based on the literature and the theory of self-enhancement and social identity, this research proposes that individuals with high and low self-esteem tend to self-gift themselves with affordable luxury (masstige) brands to either enhance their low self-esteem or maintain their high self-esteem. Hence this study hypothesized that

H2: Self-esteem moderates the influence of self-gift (a: reward (SGR), b: celebratory (SGC), c: therapeutic motivation (SGTM), d: positive mood reinforcement (SGPMR), e: hedonic (SGH), f: negative mood reduction (SGNMR), g: personal disappointment (SGPD) on masstige consumption.

2.3 Ideal social self, Self-gift, and masstige

The ideal social self is one of the four components of self-concept, and it shows how an individual wants to be seen by others (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy, 2018). An individual's self-concept (ideal-social self-image) plays an important role in selecting and purchasing specific brands, as the symbol and meaning associated with brands allow individuals to express their self-image to others (Aaker, 1997; Sirgy, 2018). In consumer behavior research, several studies provide evidence for the perspective that consumers give massive importance to social consumption, and for this

purpose, they prefer prestigious brands, especially foreign brands (Kumar & Paul, 2018; Lee & Nguyen, 2017) that help them in self-expression and attainment of desired social self-image, and to associate with the upper class (Kumar et al., 2019). Hence, when consumers want social acceptance or attain an ideal self-image, they buy more prestigious goods. They self-gift with affordable luxury, as possessing prestigious goods will help them signal their status and social self-image to others (Kim, 2013).

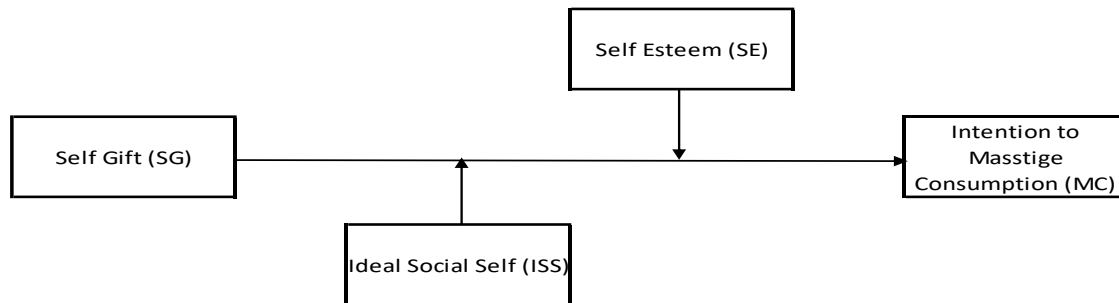
Individuals who want to show off their status and purchasing power to others are more interested in using brands socially to reach a desired social image (Nijman, 2006), as brands are considered a means to develop one's identity (Kumar & Paul, 2018). The self-perception theory (Bern, 1967) stresses that consumers seek continuous improvement in their social life and want to attain their desired social image. And according to the self-congruity theory, consumers prefer to buy brands that are congruent with their self-concept (Sirgy, 1986) and help them in self-representation (Sirgy, 2018). For this purpose, they self-gift with luxury and masstige brands as these brands allow them to display wealth and show their capacity to afford luxury and masstige brands (Park et al., 2022; Gilal et al., 2020). The same is supported by Kauppinen et al. (2014), who stated that individuals self-gift themselves for two reasons; self-communication and social communication. As a mean of social communication, consumers gift themselves with luxury for socially-oriented motives or their visibility and prestige. They self-gift themselves with luxury fashion goods like clothes, handbags, and other accessories as using these goods in public help them to express their self-image and status (Hudders & Pandelaere, 2013),

The same is the case for masstige brands. Individuals who are more concerned about their social image pay more attention to their social appearance and prefer to buy masstige brands to attain their desired social self-image (Kumar et al., 2019). It has been witnessed in the last few years that consumer, especially from the middle class, has increased the demand for affordable luxury (masstige) as they want to develop their identity, to differentiate from their reference group (Park et al., 2022), to signify wealth and status (Purohit & Radia, 2022; Bahri-Ammari et al., 2020) to show off their purchasing power to others, to get social approval (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012; Kravets & Sandikci, 2014.) and to be regarded by others (Lee & Nguyen, 2017) and to enhance prestige by spending relatively less (Kumar et al., 2019), this implies that individuals who want to attain their desired ideal social-self will self-gift themselves with masstige brands. Therefore, this study proposes that individuals who want to get closer to their desired ideal social self will be more involved in self-gifting with masstige brands.

Hence this study proposes the following hypothesis, while the conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.

H3: Ideal- social-self moderates between SG (IV) (a: reward (SGR), b: celebratory (SGC), c: therapeutic motivation (SGTM), d: positive mood reinforcement (SGPMR), e: hedonic (SGH), f: negative mood reduction (SGNMR), g: personal disappointment (SGPD) and MC (DV).

Figure No 1: Conceptual Framework



3. Methodology

3.1 Product category and brand

This study is aimed to address the consumers' motives for masstige consumption; more specifically, this research explores the relationship between self-gift consumer behavior and masstige consumption. This paper also intended to investigate the influence of self-esteem and ideal social self as moderators on the relationship between self-gift and masstige consumption. This study is focused on how the self-gift behavior of Pakistani consumers affects the masstige consumption of smartphone brands. This study is conducted in the context of five smartphone brands. I. Phones, Samsung, Huawei, MI, Infinix and Vivo. This study decided to use these smartphone brands for different reasons; first of all, the smartphone market is huge in Pakistan, with over 85 million users (PTA, 2022), and almost every individual owns a smartphone; Second, it has been commonly observed in Pakistan that when individuals self-gift for themselves on different occasions (i.e., promotions, birthday, new job, etc.) among other items they usually prefer to buy prestigious smartphone brands for themselves. Third, some researchers have found that individuals buy a smartphone to show off their status (Kumar et al., 2021) and to feel happy about themselves by using prestigious smartphones (Choi, 2015). These findings are related to the ideal social self and the motive to enhance one's self-esteem, which this study studies as the moderator for the relationship between self-gift and masstige. Fourth, smartphone brands fit well in the masstige research context due to their prestige. This study's top three smartphone brands capture over 50% of the global market share (Counterpoint Technology Market Research, 2020). A previous study has also recommended studying smartphone brands in the masstige context because of their mass prestige (Kumar & Paul, 2018). Hence this study decided to use these smartphone brands for exploring the relationship between self-gift and masstige.

3.2 Sampling and Measuring Instrument

A structured questionnaire was designed, and all the users of the smartphone brands used in this study were asked to respond to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed using Google Forms, and the link to Google Forms was shared with the potential respondents with the help of social media (Whatsapp, Facebook). Using convenience sampling, the questionnaire was delivered to 700 smartphone users in Pakistan, and 560 usable responses were received that were subjected to further analyses.

This study used previously developed and empirically validated measurement scales to measure the constructs used in this study (self-gift, self-esteem, masstige, and ideal social self). The constructs were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, and respondents were required to rate the extent to which they strongly disagree to strongly agree with the item statement on a seven-point Likert scale: 1=strongly disagree to agree 7=strongly.

Self-gifting behavior is operationalized by a scale developed by Mortimer (2015). This scale consists of seven dimensions of self-gift. 27-items measure these dimensions. Self-esteem is operationalized by a scale developed by Rosenberg (1965). This scale comprised of 10-items

The scale that operationalizes masstige consumption is developed by Paul (2015). Paul established the masstige mean score scale (MMSS) using a scale-based questionnaire of ten questions to measure “masstige marketing”. All ten items' values are then added to make a masstige mean index (MMI). The values of MMI represent the degree to which customers attach prestige to a brand. Greater value implies more prestige and awareness, whereas lower values show less prestige that a consumer attaches to a brand. The values range from 10 to 70 since the items are assessed on a 7-point Likert scale. Using this instrument and MMI score, the study will describe the values of masstige that Pakistani consumers attach to different brands of smartphones.

The self-congruity scale developed by Sirgy et al. (1997) operationalizes the ideal social self. This scale has four operational dimensions, and the ideal-social self is one of these dimensions used to operationalize the ideal social self in the current study.

3.3 Masstige Mean Index (MMI)

This study used the MMSS masstige mean score scale developed by Paul (2015) to calculate the masstige score of all the smartphone brands used in this study. The results revealed that iPhone and Samsung got 63.5 and 62.4 scores, respectively, indicating that both brands are “top of the mind”. Moreover, Huawei (54.9) and MI (53.6) are in the process of establishing themselves as masstige brands, while Infinix (47.1) and Vivo (46.4) are unable to register themselves as masstige brands.

3.4 Analysis

To address the goals of this study, the collected data was analyzed using several techniques, such as factor analysis, structural equation modeling, and moderation analysis. First, data were subjected to Common method bias (CMB) to ensure there was no CMB issue in the data. The results of Harman's test indicated that the variance explained by a single factor was 41%. Therefore, there is no issue of CMB in the data.

Before conducting the factor analysis, this study employed the Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) to ensure the suitability of the data for factor analysis. For all the scales used in this study, the value of Bartlett's test of sphericity is less than 0.001 (i.e., $p < .001$), and the value of KMO is greater than 0.50, which indicates that the collected data is suitable for factor analysis.

This study utilized confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as a statistical method using AMOS 22 to measure the measurement model used in this study. The result shows (Table 1) that the model is a good fit as all the values are within the acceptable range (GFI = 0.806, RMSEA = 0.067, CFI = 0.912). The factor loading of each item is greater than 0.60 except for three items of self-esteem (SE5, SE6, and SE9), so out of a total of 42 items, only these three items were deleted, and 39 items were retained for further analysis. The average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than the threshold value of 0.50 for each scale (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), while the composite reliability of constructs ranged from 0.787 to 0.918. These figures indicated that the constructs used in this study are reliable and have discriminant and convergent validities (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Table No 1: Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Factor loading	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	CR
Self-Gifting	SGC1	0.96	0.7926	0.905	0.918
	SGC2	0.99			
	SGC3	0.69			
	SGTM1	0.71	0.72338	0.907	0.910
	SGTM2	0.98			
	SGTM3	0.99			
	SGTM4	0.67	0.68935	0.898	0.900
	SGH1	0.82			
	SGH2	0.95			
	SGH3	0.85			
	SGPMR1	0.80			
	SGPMR2	0.85			
	SGPMR3	0.85			

	SCPMR4	0.82			
	SGR1	0.63			
	SGR2	0.87			
	SGR3	0.70	0.65105	0.883	0.879
	SGR4	0.98			
	SGPD1	0.72			
	SGPD2	0.89	0.76585	0.865	0.867
	SGPD3	0.79			
	SGNMR1	0.87			
	SGNMR2	0.86			
	SGNMR3	0.92	0.88883	0.876	0.875
	SGNMR4	0.64			
Self-Esteem	Self-Esteem 1	0.83			
	Self-Esteem 3	0.84			
	Self-Esteem 4	0.69	0.58943	0.857	0.868
	Self-Esteem 7	0.87			
	Self-Esteem 10	0.67			
Ideal Social Self (ISS)	ISS1	0.99			
	ISS2	0.96			
	ISS3	0.54	0.62395	0.866	0.859
	ISS4	0.55			
Intentions to Masstige Consumption (MC)	MC1	0.97			
	MC2	0.89			
	MC3	0.96			
	MC4	0.97			
	MC5	0.86			
	MC6	0.89	0.89888	0.897	0.892
	MC7	0.97			
	MC8	0.92			
	MC9	0.96			
	MC10	0.92			

3.5 Descriptive and Correlation

Table 2 shows the descriptive and correlation results among the study variables. As mentioned, self-gifting is positively correlated with masstige consumption, self-esteem, and ideal social self. Additionally, self-esteem and ideal social self correlated positively with masstige consumption behavior.

Table No 2: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
SGR	4.3915	1.395	1									
SGPD	3.7929	1.602	.502*	1								
SGC	4.6042	1.491	.561**	.461**	1							
SGTM	4.5143	1.426	.608**	.490**	.678**	1						
SGNMR	4.1711	1.287	.507**	.608**	.508**	.605**	1					
SGPMR	4.4393	1.422	.508**	.407**	.576**	.602**	.626**	1				
SGH	4.3625	1.384	.486**	.468**	.517**	.576**	.597**	.685**	1			
ISS	4.0619	1.650	.268**	.219**	.211**	.299**	.325**	.370**	.299**	1		
MS	4.3636	1.248	.388**	.259**	.294**	.392**	.383**	.442**	.355**	.624**	1	
SE	4.5621	1.993	.366**	.225**	.328**	.338**	.359**	.425**	.369**	.486**	.579**	1

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

3.6 Hypotheses Testing

The main objective of this study is to explore the direct link between self-gift and masstige consumption. The first hypothesis (H1) proposes that all dimensions of self-gift are positively related to masstige. The findings are given in Table 3, which indicates that masstige is positively influenced by the self-gift dimensions, namely, reward (H1a: $b = 0.348$, $p = 0.000$), celebration (H1b: $b = 0.247$, $p = 0.000$), therapeutic motivation (H1c: $b = 0.344$, $p = 0.001$), positive mood reinforcement (H1d: $b = 0.388$, $p = 0.001$), hedonic (H1e: $b = 0.321$, $p = 0.001$), negative mood reduction (H1f: $b = 0.371$, $p = 0.000$), and personal disappointment (H1g: $b = 0.202$, $p = 0.000$). Hence, these findings support the direct relationship between self-gift and masstige.

Table No 3: Direct Hypotheses

Estimate				S.E.	C.R.	P	Hypothesis	
MC	<---	SGR	.348	.035	9.967	***	H1a	Accepted
MC	<---	SGC	.247	.034	7.285	***	H1b	Accepted
MC	<---	SGTM	.344	.034	10.114	***	H1c	Accepted
MC	<---	SGPMR	.388	.033	11.640	***	H1d	Accepted
MC	<---	SGH	.321	.036	8.990	***	H1e	Accepted
MC	<---	SGNMR	.371	.038	9.789	***	H1f	Accepted
MC	<---	SGPD	.202	.032	6.333	***	H1g	Accepted

SGR = self-gifting reward; SGC = self-gifting celebration; SGTM = self-gifting therapeutic motivation; SGPMR = self-gifting positive reinforcement; SGH = self-gifting hedonic; MC = masstige consumption

3.7 Moderation Analysis

This study investigates the moderating role of self-esteem and ideal social self on the relationship between self-gift and masstige consumption. This study used Stata Tools Package to

investigate two-way interactions. The moderation effect of both moderators is discussed below in detail.

3.8 Moderation 1: SE Moderates Between Self-Gift (IV) and MCB (DV)

H2: Self-esteem moderates the influence of self-gift (a: reward (SGR), b: celebratory (SGC), c: therapeutic motivation (SGTM), d: positive mood reinforcement (SGPMR), e: hedonic (SGH), f: negative mood reduction (SGNMR), g: personal disappointment (SGPD) on masstige consumption.

This research explores the moderating effect of self-esteem on the relationship between self-gift (IV) and MC (DV). And results indicate that self-esteem significantly moderates the relationship between self-gift reward (SGR) and masstige consumption (MC) as the unstandardized regression coefficient of the interaction term is $B3 = 0.043$ ($p = .000$). The results also confirm the significant moderating role of self-esteem for the relationship between SGC and MC as the unstandardized regression coefficients of interaction terms is $B3 = 0.081$ ($p = .000$). The regression coefficient of interaction terms of self-esteem (moderator) self-gift (SGTM)(IV) and (MC)(DV) is $B3 = 0.058$ ($p = .000$) which shows that SE strengthens the positive relationship between Self-gift (SGTM) (IV) and MCB (DV). Similarly, self-esteem has a significant moderating role in the relationship between self-gift (SGPMR) (IV) and MCB (DV), as the regression coefficient for the interaction term is $B2 = 0.020$ ($p = 0.028$).

The moderating role of self-esteem is also significant and positive for the relationship between self-gift (SGTM) and MCB (DV) as the unstandardized regression coefficients value of interaction of Self-gift (SGTM) (IV), MCB (DV), and SE moderator is $B3 = 0.058$ ($p = .000$). The results indicate that SE strengthens the positive relationship between Self-gift (SGTM) (IV) and MCB (DV). Similarly, self-esteem has a significant moderating role in the relationship between self-gift (SGPMR) (IV) and MCB (DV), as the regression coefficient for the interaction term is $B2 = 0.020$ ($p = 0.028$). The moderating effect of self-esteem between self-gift negative mood reduction (SGNMR) and masstige is positive and significant as their regression coefficient for interaction term is $B2 = 0.043$ ($p = 0.000$). Similarly, self-esteem significantly moderates the relationship between self-gift personal disappointment (SGPD) (IV) and MCB (DV) as their regression coefficient for interaction terms are as $B2 = 0.083$ ($p = 0.000$). But the moderating role of self-esteem is not significant for the relationship between self-gift hedonic (SGH) and MCB. Their interaction terms regression coefficient is $B2 = 0.013$ ($p = 0.181$). The interaction term is not significant, showing no moderating role of self-esteem for the relationship between self-gift hedonic (SGH) and masstige consumption. The moderation effect of self-esteem between self-gift (SGR, SGC, SGTM, SGPMR, SGH, SGNMR, SGPD) and masstige consumption is illustrated by the figures (1-6).

Moderation Effect of Self-Esteem

Figure No: 1

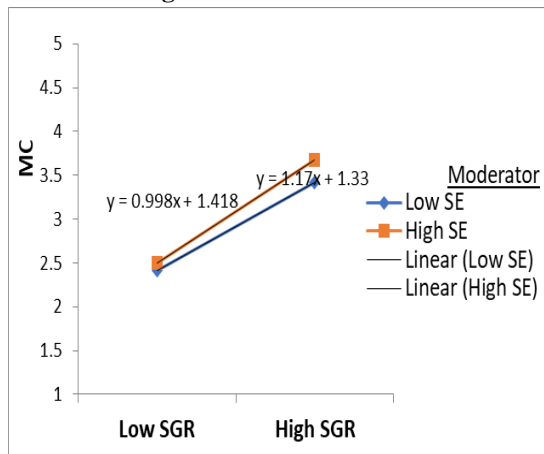


Figure No: 2

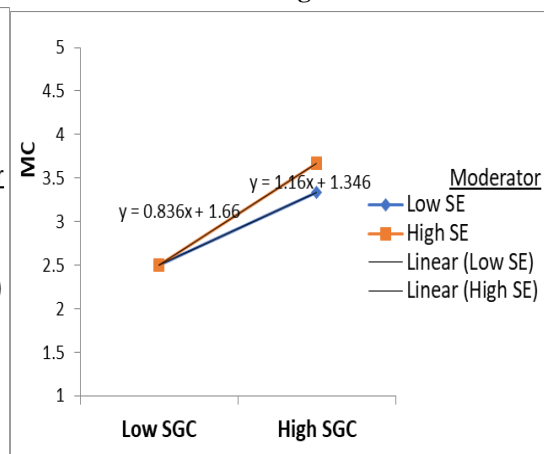


Figure No: 3

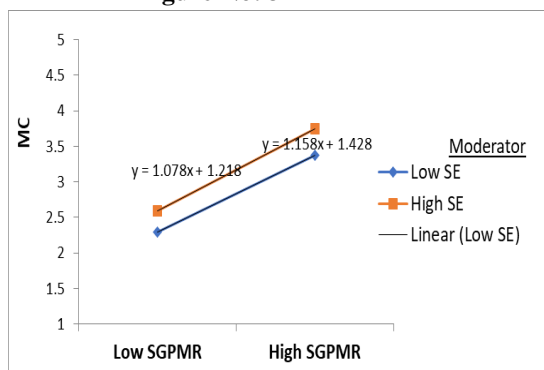


Figure No: 4

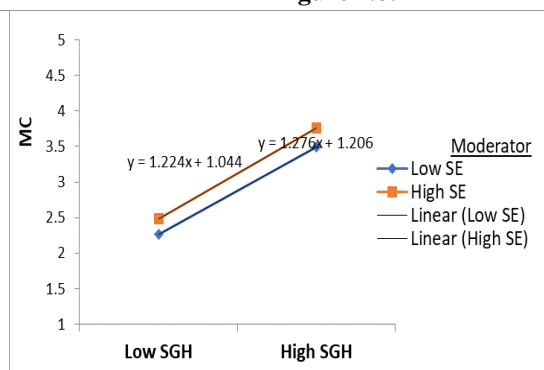


Figure No:5

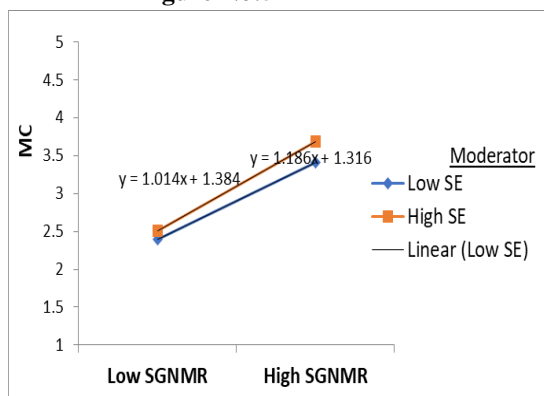
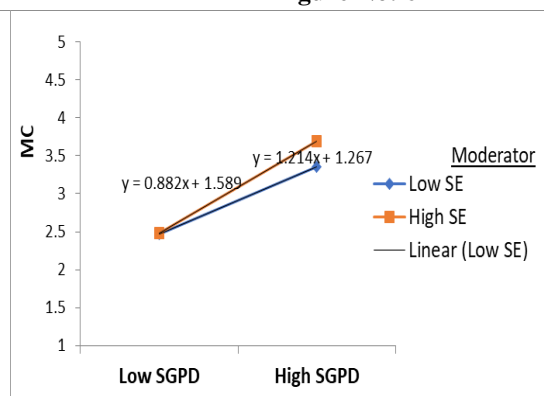


Figure No: 6



3.9 Moderation 2: Ideal Social-Self (ISS) Moderates Between Self-Gift (IV) and MCB (DV)

H3: Ideal- social-self moderates between *SG* (IV) (a: reward (SGR), b: celebratory (SGC), c: therapeutic motivation (SGTM), d: positive mood reinforcement (SGPMR), e: hedonic (SGH), f: negative mood reduction (SGNMR), g: personal disappointment (SGPD) and *MC* (DV)

This research explores the moderating effect of the ideal social self on the relationship between self-gift (IV) and MC (DV). The results indicate that the ideal social self (ISS) strengthens the positive relationship between the Self-gift reward SGR (IV) and MCB (DV). As the unstandardized regression of interaction of Self-gift (SGR) (IV), MCB (DV), and ISS moderator is $B3 = 0.040$ ($p = .000$)

The moderation effect of ideal social self (ISS) on the relationship between self-gift personal disappointment (SGPD) (IV) and MCB (DV) is also significant and positive as the unstandardized regression coefficient interaction of Self-gift (SGPD) (IV), MCB (DV), and ISS moderator is $B3 = 0.037$ ($p = .000$). The findings show that ISS enhances the positive relationship between Self-gift (SGPD) (IV) and MCB (DV).

Table No 4: Moderation Effect of Self-Esteem

Moderation	Estimate	S.E.	p-value	Hypothesis	Conclusion
SGR *SE – MC	0.043	0.009	0	H2a	Accepted
SGC* SE – MC	0.081	0.01	0	H2b	Accepted
SGTM* SE – MC	0.058	0.009	0	H2c	Accepted
SGPMR * SE – MC	0.02	0.008	0.028	H2d	Accepted
SGH* SE – MC	0.013	0.009	0.181	H2e	Rejected
SGNMR* SE – MC	0.043	0.01	0	H2f	Accepted
SGPD* SE -MC	0.083	0.009	0	H2g	Accepted

The ideal social self significantly moderates the relationship between self-gift celebratory (SGC) and masstige consumption (MC) as the coefficient of the interaction term is $B3 = 0.028$ ($p = .000$). Similarly, the ideal social self has a significant moderating role in the relationship between self-gift (SGTM) (IV) and MC (DV as the regression coefficient for interaction term is $B2 = 0.030$ ($p = 0.000$). The moderating effect of ideal social self on the relationship between self-gift negative mood reduction (SGNMR) and masstige is positive and significant as their regression coefficient interaction terms are $B2 = 0.016$ ($p = 0.040$). Similarly, the ideal social self significantly moderates the relationship between self-gift personal hedonic (SGH) (IV) and MC (DV) as their regression coefficient for interaction terms are $asB2 = 0.030$ ($p = 0.000$).

But the ideal social self does not moderate the relationship between self-gift hedonic (SGPMR) and MCB, as the regression coefficient interaction terms are not significant $B2 = 0.004$

($p = 0.559$), which shows that there is no moderating role of the ideal social self for the relationship between self-gift hedonic (SGPMR) and masstige consumption. The moderation effect of the ideal social self between self-gift (SGR, SGC, SGTM, SGPMR, SGH, SGNMR, SGPD) and masstige consumption is illustrated by the figures (7-13).

Table No 5: Moderating Effect of Ideal-Social Self

Moderation	Estimate	S.E.	p-value	Hypothesis	Conclusion
SGR *ISS – MC	0.040	0.007	0.000	H3a	Accepted
SGC* ISS – MC	0.028	0.007	0.000	H3b	Accepted
SGTM* ISS – MC	0.030	0.007	0.000	H3c	Accepted
SGPMR * ISS – MC	0.004	0.007	0.559	H3d	Rejected
SGH* ISS – MC	0.030	0.008	0.000	H3e	Accepted
SGNMR* ISS – MC	0.016	0.008	0.040	H3f	Accepted
SGPD* ISS – MC	0.037	0.008	0.000	H3g	Accepted

Moderation Effect of Ideal Social Self

Figure No: 7

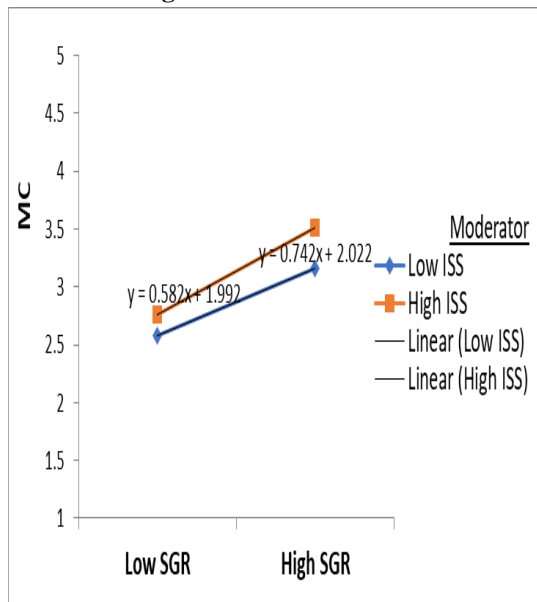


Figure No: 8

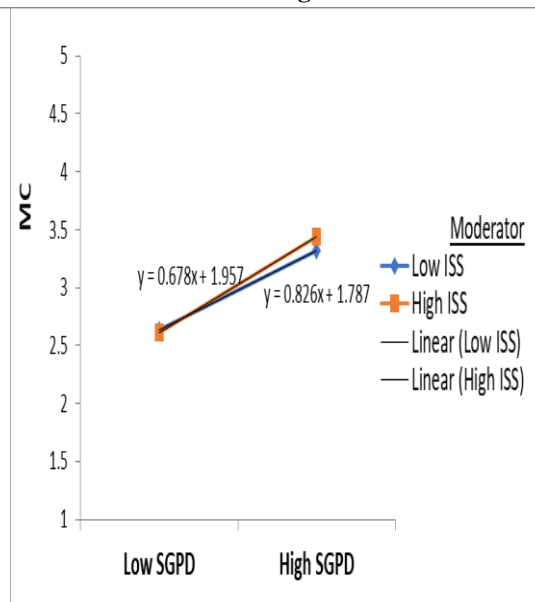


Figure No:9

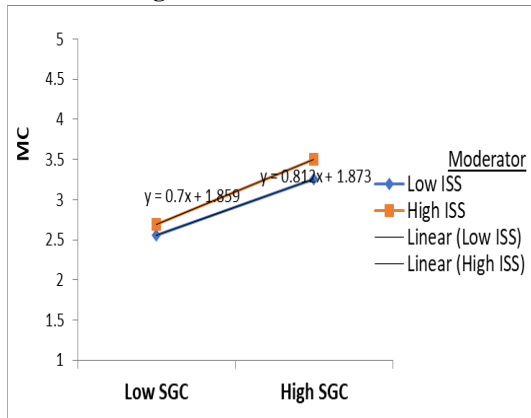


Figure No: 10

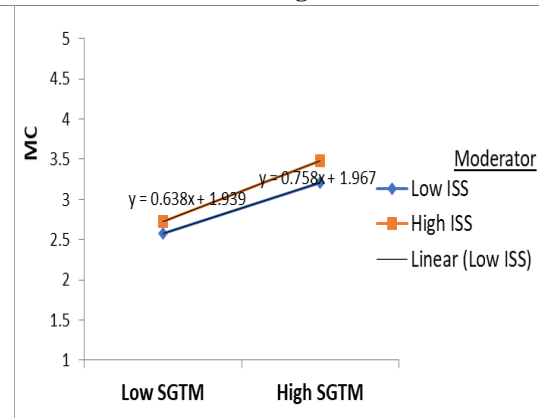


Figure No:11

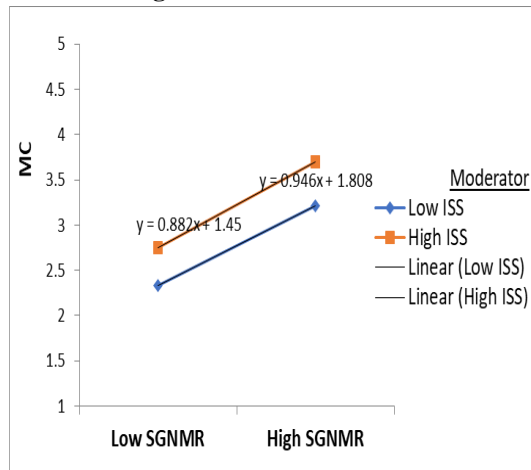


Figure No: 12

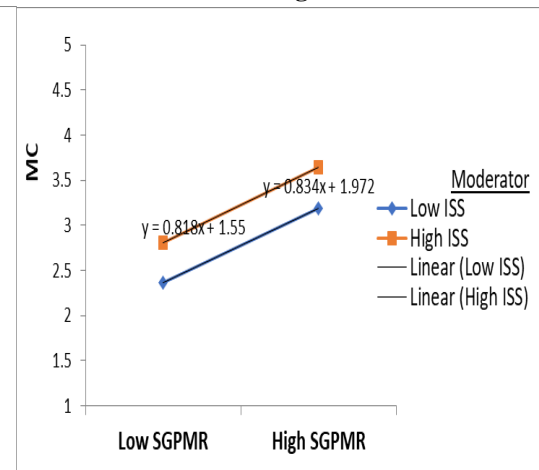
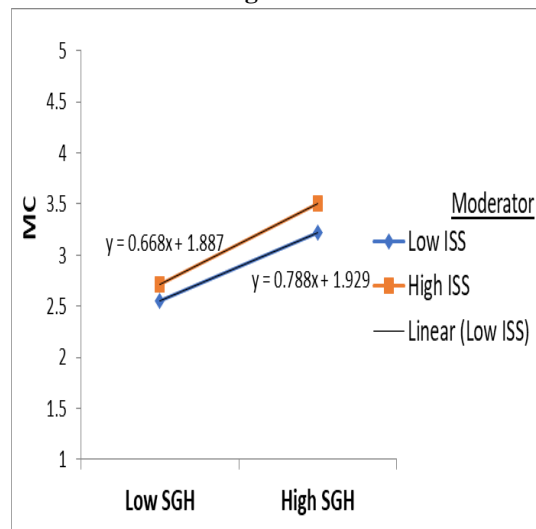


Figure: 13



3.10 Discussion

This study aimed to address the motives behind the consumer's demand for masstige brands. This study predicts that consumers are demanded masstige brands as they want to raise their living standards, show off their status, to get social recognition from society. Additionally, considering the context of global economic growth and the upward trajectory of middle-class earnings, the trend of self-gift has increased. This study proposes that the increasing trend of self-gift has increased the demand for masstige smartphones. Consumers who are self-oriented and have a high degree of self-gift behavior are more involved in buying prestigious smartphone brands for themselves. In the recent few years, possessing a prestigious smartphone has become a status symbol. Individuals buy a prestigious smartphone as a self-gift for events and work achievements like promotions. With the increasing trend of masstige marketing, the trend of self-gifting has also increased as the masstige brands provide more options to individuals to buy something nice for themselves within their financial limit. When it comes to self-gift, it has become a common practice that individuals prefer to upgrade their smartphones as they perceive that possessing flagship phones can help them express their status.

Similarly, Pakistani consumers have increased the demand for prestigious smartphone brands, and they even go out of their financial limits to buy top-of-the-line smartphone brands for themselves. Accordingly, the primary focus of the current study is to investigate the influence of self-gift behavior on buying masstige smartphones in Pakistan. The study proposes that consumers involved in self-gifting behavior buy more masstige smartphone brands. The results of this study also confirm that self-gift behavior increases the consumption of masstige smartphone brands in Pakistan; this shows that Pakistani consumers self-gift themselves with a smartphone when they want to reward themselves after some achievement, celebrate some event (birthday, anniversary, promotion), motivate themselves for positive mood reinforcement, and hedonic motives.

This study also estimated the masstige value that Pakistani consumers associate with these smartphone brands in Pakistan, and the results show that iPhone scores highest on masstige value, followed by Samsung and other brands included in this study. Besides the masstige value, the response rate shows that out of a sample of 560 consumers, 248 have purchased Samsung, and only 98 are using the Apple iPhone. The reason could be that Pakistani consumers consider Apple a more expensive luxury brand. On the other side, they consider Samsung as a masstige brand, which is accessible within their financial limit as Samsung provides more options to consumers in terms of variety. The results also reflect that in Pakistan, Samsung is the top preference of customers, followed by Apple, MI, and Huawei. The preference for these brands is due to the global prestige associated with these brands. These findings align with studies that noted that Samsung and iPhone are high on masstige value. Consumers buy these brands for themselves as

they provide them with happiness and help them in booting their confidence, self-esteem and social identity (Paul, 2018; Choi, 2015; Kumar et al., 2021).

Therefore, considering the study's findings, the moderating role of self-esteem and ideal social self on the relationship between self-gift and masstige. Accordingly, the findings of this study support the hypothesis (H2) that self-esteem significantly moderates the relationship between self-gift (reward, celebratory, therapeutic motivation, positive mood reinforcement, negative mood reduction, and personal disappointment) and masstige. Based on the theory of self-reinforcement and the study's findings, this study states that individuals with a high degree of self-esteem are self-oriented and spend more on themselves in terms of self-gift and to self-gift; they prefer to buy prestigious top-quality goods for themselves. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem face the fear of social approval. To overcome this fear and enhance their self-esteem, they spend more on self-gifting themselves prestigious goods. In light of the study's outcomes, it accepts the hypothesis that self-esteem (low and high) strengthens the relationship between self-gift and masstige.

This study also confirms the moderating role of the ideal social self (H3). Based on the social comparison theory, this study hypothesized that individuals are driven to attain their desired ideal social self-image and to attain their desired social self-image, they start spending more on goods and brands that may help them in improving their living standards, reaching high status and developing their identity in the society; hence they tend to be more self-oriented and spend more on self-gifting with prestigious goods. Therefore, this study proposed that the desire to attain an ideal social self will motivate individuals to self-gift themselves with masstige brands, and the findings of this study also support this hypothesis (H3) which states that the ideal social self-strengths the relationship between self-gift and masstige.

3.11 Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This study holds implications for both theoretical frameworks and managerial decision-making. Regarding the theoretical implication, this study tries to extend the masstige theory by highlighting the motives that lead consumers to buy masstige brands. This study highlighted that the more self-oriented consumers usually tend to self-gift themselves. While self-gifting, they prefer to buy most luxury goods and services within their financial limit. So, this study extends the masstige theory by adding self-gift and self-esteem as factors that lead individuals to buy masstige brands.

This study found that consumers buy masstige brands when they want to self-gift; this study suggests to masstige marketers that they may use slogans in their advertisements like “you are worth it,” “you deserve it,” etc., that will attract the individuals who are self-oriented and will urge them to self-gift with these brands. This study also found that consumers who want to enhance or maintain their self-esteem prefer to buy masstige brands. Similarly, consumers who want to

achieve their desired ideal social self prefers to buy prestigious masstige brand hence this study suggest to masstige marketers that they may develop their marketing strategies to assure individuals that purchase of their brands will help individuals in boosting self-esteem and getting closer to their desired ideal social self.

This study also measures the masstige value that Pakistani consumers associate with smartphone brands that found that iPhone and Samsung are considered top-of-mind brands, and Huawei and MI smartphones are establishing themselves as masstige brands. At the same time, Infinix and Vivo have not been recognized as masstige brands. This information will help the managers of these brands to check the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. It will further help them develop more effective strategies to make their brands masstige.

3.12 Limitations and Future Directions

The present study, however, does have certain limitations and suggests potential avenues for future research. The main aim of this study is to contribute to the theory of masstige, and it tried to identify the motives that lead consumers to buy masstige brands. But there is still a scarcity of research on masstige in terms of scale development, and studies from the service sector, so future studies may try to cover these gaps. This study focused on self-gift as the main factor that leads consumers to buy masstige smartphone brands. Still, many other factors urge consumers to buy masstige brands so that further studies may investigate the other factors of masstige consumption. This study has used only one category of masstige brands (smartphone), but other industries (beauty, apparel, fashion products, automobile, etc.) also use the masstige strategy to reach new consumers. Hence future studies may also investigate the factors of masstige consumption using other masstige brands.

4 Conclusion

Self-gifting practices have increased in the last few years as individuals become more self-oriented, and few studies connect self-gift behavior with luxury brands. As far as the researcher is aware, this study is the initial attempt to establish a connection between self-gifting and masstige brands. Hence, this study makes a valuable contribution to the expansion of the theoretical framework surrounding masstige theory. The empirical evidence from this study supports that all dimensions of self-gift (reward, celebration, therapeutic motivation, personal disappointment, hedonic, negative mood reduction, and positive mood reinforcement) motivate consumers to buy masstige brands for themselves. In Pakistan, individuals who want to self-gift prefer to buy masstige brands as they offer better quality and prestige within one's financial limit.

This study also supports the moderating role of self-esteem and ideal social self on the relationship between self-gift and masstige consumption. It concludes that when individuals want to boost their low self-esteem or maintain their high self-esteem, they tend to buy more prestigious goods for themselves. Hence self-esteem strengthens the positive relationship between self-gift

and masstige consumption. Similarly, individuals who want to attain their desired ideal social self-image tend to buy more masstige goods for themselves; doing so will help them develop their identity and status in society. Hence, this study confirms that the ideal social self-image strengthens the positive relationship between self-gift and masstige consumption.

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